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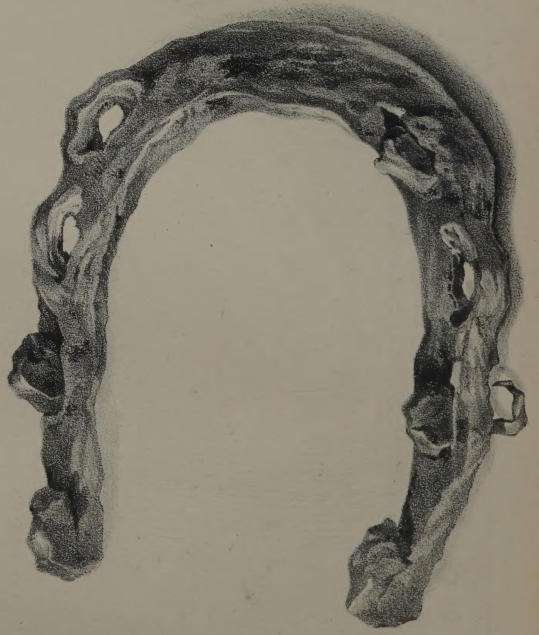


Two ancient Shoes found near Silbury Hill in Wiltshire.

A DESCRIPTION of two ancient HORSE-SHOES, found near SILBURY HILL, in WILTSHIRE.

As there appears to be some rather remarkable circumstances, disclosed by these very ancient shoes, which attended the early state of the art of shoeing the horse, so we have considered them well worthy of being figured and described, since we find no record or description of such practices in any work left us on this interesting subject.

They were sent to me from Wiltshire, by my respected friend W. Bartlett, Esq. Surgeon, of Great Bedwyn, in this county, who received them from the person who found them; the one being picked up by the proprietor of the meadow in which Silbury hill is situated, and the other by the occupant of a neighbouring farm not far distant from it.

My worthy friend, in his letter accompanying them, says, "one of these shoes was found by the levelling of a bank, in Silbury-hill Mead, for the purpose of watering it," this was the shoe No. 2. "The soil removed on this occasion was principally chalk, to the depth of a foot or two;" no mention is made of any part of the horse, or of his bones being found along with it, but the skeleton of a man was found at some little distance from this place. Now this Silbury hill is a well-known mound, seen on the road from London to Bath, on the right hand of the road, a few miles from Marlborough, and is supposed of great antiquity, and of British or of Roman origin; it represents in its figure the regular *frustum* of a cone, whose elevation is about one hundred and seventy-five feet, and whose diameter at its base, is found to be about five hundred feet, and out of which hill have been dug, at various times, ancient relics.

The other shoe, No. 1, he says, "was found upon the down on the opposite side of the road, at the distance of nearly half a mile from the former mead, under a heap of flints. These flints, it is probable, were taken at some former period from the above spot, and were deposited upon the down probably for the mending of the roads or paths; for, from the perfect accordance and similarity of both these shoes, in their peculiar make and fashion, and other circumstances, there can be no reasonable doubt, we think, of their having been constructed at the same period, and in all probability were belonging to the same animal, the one being a hind and the other a fore shoe, and of nearly the same size, as also with perfectly similar nails: being regarded, perhaps, by the laborers, who removed the flints, as mere old iron, they were passed unnoticed by them, as they sometimes find, in these localities, Roman and other coins of some value."

This seems to be all that my worthy friend has reported of them, and we shall now proceed to make a few remarks upon the articles themselves. They are by far the oldest shoes I have ever seen; neither is there, that I know of, any older shoe on record in present existence; at least the only one recorded as more ancient is the shoe said to have been found in the coffin of Childeric, king of the French, who was buried at Tournay in Flanders, and the opening of whose tomb more than a century ago, was described by Chifletius; and which shoe is again copied in Montfaucon's Antiquities, tom. 1, p. 16, t. 6; but on turning to it, for it is stated to have fallen to pieces on being handled, the shoe there represented, differs in nothing from a modern French shoe of the last age, that I forbear to notice it, otherwise it was my intention to have introduced it here by the side of these.

We think it something more than presumable, that the animal must have been buried with his shoes left on, since the nails in both shoes are present, and with the clenches quite perfect, and in

their flexed state; now had these nails been drawn, they must have been straightened, and as the hoofs gradually rotted away from the s oes, these were left with their nails in the state in which they are now presented to us.

One of these nails detached from the shoe is seen at fig. 1, others may be seen *in sitû*, in fig. 2, and are observable with the shank of the nail forming a remarkable elbow about its middle, which was rather a puzzling circumstance on first viewing this relic, the bend being almost or quite at a right angle, and the point of the nail is also bent again at nearly a right angle, and deflected from the plane of the former bend; now the explanation of this appears to be, that at this early period of the shoeing art, they could not point a nail as we now do, with a semi wedge termination, in order to give it a bias outwards, but they used a sharp-pointed nail simply, such as all nails are usually provided with; and with these they dared not therefore attempt to carry the nail high up the hoof, in the fear of pricking the horse, but were satisfied to bring it out very low down, by an oblique direction given to it in driving, and what is more remarkable still, after they had pierced the hoof through and brought out the shank, they did not wring it off and turn it down, for the clench, as we do at present, but carried the shank so exposed, along the surface of the hoof to some distance, which caused the large square elbow we see, and afterwards they drove the point into the outer shell of the hoof and so made it fast; exactly in the way we see a carpenter of modern times, wireing on the lid of a box, he drives his wire through it, then carries it along the upper surface of the lid, and finally sends the point of the wire into the substance of the wood, and so fastens it. There is, that I know of, no record of such a proceeding as this, in this art of shoeing. And it also shows what I have often observed in mechanical inventions, that we are generally obliged to take a circuitous course in order to find out the shorter way. To wring off the shank and turn it down at once is much easier and stronger than this round-about proceeding.

We now shall notice the make of the shoes themselves, and their construction as truly exhibiting an early period of the art. Their mould or general form, is neither broad nor heavy, as in the oldest French shoes that we have ever seen, but they are rather what would be called a light shoe. In their upper surface, flat, a little concaved however inwards, and at the inflections perfectly flat. The under surface of the shoe is rounded a little and convex, or rising in the middle, having in each of the quarters, three immense deep oval or oblong stamp-holes or countersinks, as mechanics would call them, not very near to the outer rim of the shoe, and perforated through in the middle of these cavities, with three pretty large almost square perforations, the size of these, which time and oxydation may perhaps have a little enlarged, gave abundant opportunity for the early artisan, to direct his nail as much obliquely outwards as he wished, which a more confined aperture, or greater thickness of metal would not have allowed him so readily to do. Now these stamp pits must have been done with a very rough clumsy tool, for the rim or outer margin of the shoe has been terribly disturbed by it, and thrown out into bulges of a surprising size, disfiguring the shoe very much, and also endangering the horse's legs.

The holes for nailing also are carried very far backwards, and near enough, or in fact too near, to the inflexions of the hoof, thereby pinioning it the more grievously, which shews that they had no notion whatever of any elastic action that it possessed, or that the hoof grew narrower and thinner as it passed backwards. The heels of these shoes are provided with very prominent calkins, made by doubling or turning over the iron, and lapping and welding it; finding, no doubt, (having no silly college theory to trouble their practice,) the very vast advantages which attended this plan of the shoe.

The wearing line of the shoe at the pince in No. 1 was considerably worn away; but in No. 2 hardly so much. And we may remark also, that these shoes, generally speaking, are thickest forwards and go declining in thickness, till you arrive at the calkins, which showed a degree of wit that our contemporaries of these later ages did not possess, who for the most part, thicken their shoe all the way to the heel, thereby loading the poor animal with an unnecessary weight of iron in the parts least requiring it. The inside of these shoes are rather thicker in metal than the outside, which was certainly an error, though it saved them considerable trouble in hammering them out.

The nail heads are very remarkable for their size, and projecting high from the shoe; and that part of the head next the aperture in the shoe is formed with a very abrupt broad shoulder, and nearly straight, but a little inclining however towards the shank; the sides of the head of the nail are nearly straight and perpendicular, forming an obtuse angle to the former line, upwards it passes by another converging line towards the summit, or top of the nail, which is made flat, and is of the length of about a quarter of an inch, for receiving the office of the hammer; now the head itself stands out of the shoe, as we have observed, and if embraced by the fingers is flat, and shows a thickness of only about, or perhaps rather less, than the eighth of an inch. The shank of the nail is short compared with modern nails, and is square, tapering all the way to the point, but is made rather flatter and broader on one side, viz. that side which is corresponding to the lateral flatness of the head.

The excellent preservation in which these shoes are found, can only be accounted for by their having been for a long time defended perhaps, by the hoofs to which they were attached, and secondarily, from their being deposited among flints and chalk, the most indestructible and undecomposable materials of all the earthy substances, the former at least is most particularly so.

Whose horse's feet these shoes protected, or of what period they are, it is impossible for us in the least to conjecture; whether they might possibly have belonged to the owner of the skeleton, which was buried, as we have remarked, at no great distance from the spot;—all we know is, that they must be very ancient.

Part of a page remaining unoccupied, and printing being dear, and encouragement scarce, not to waste it uselessly, I shall devote it to a few remarks on Silbury hill, and that remarkable Druidical temple of which this hill was the appendage, it being placed exactly due south or in the meridian of the centre piece of that stupendous edifice, serving there astronomical purposes probably, but more certainly useful as a commanding station for all the lesser mounds of the kingdom for securing intelligence and giving signals in case of inimical approach, for it has been remarked that these mounds were always so placed as to be visible from each other.

This astonishing mound was opened in the year 1723, and a human skeleton found in it, the antlers also of a deer, a knife with a horn handle, a horse's bit, which, in my treatise *on Bits of Horses*, I have described and figured, and have conjectured whether it might not have belonged to King Cole, whose name *Coel*, perhaps, or *Cœlius*, in Latin, might have given the name to this hill, *Cœlius* easily making Silbury. The Stag's horns, the knife, and the bit would seem perhaps to smell of the Sportsman, and they who sacrifice in the morning at fair Dian's shrine in the evening often become the zealous votaries of Bacchus, which may account for the British King having the appellation of the merry king of England.

On perusing Sir Richard Colt Hoare's splendid work on North Wiltshire I was led unexpectedly into some reflections on this astonishing Druidical structure, the most magnificent building of the kind perhaps in the world, and of its name and of the name of the village now resting on the site of

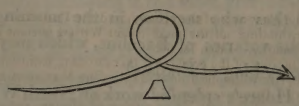
it, and which is called *Abury* by Dr. Stukely who is followed in this by Sir Richard and others; the natives of the village however call it *Aybury*, which I believe to be right, for certain reasons which, with much deference to such truly great authorities, I shall, with all due submission, expose.

It is stated in Sir Richard's work, in a note at the foot of a page, that in the Chaldee language, a serpent was called *acan*, or *akan*, and it is probable therefore in the Phœnicean language also; these Phœniceans, the builders of this vast temple, gave their name to it, since one of the hills adjacent to the village of Kennet is called at this day *hagpen* or *hackpen* hill, the British word *pen*, signifying *head*, being superadded to the word *ag*, or *ak*, the name of the serpent,—and on this hill, the head of this immense snake was represented by a double circle of stones, the outer of which was of the extent of forty yards diameter, so vast were its proportions. The area of the coil was twenty-eight acres, and the wings of the building extended nearly two miles.

Now if the Phœnicean name was appropriated to this building which there is just reason to believe, it is likely also the village which followed it, and stood upon its site would partake of the same name, and we suspect that *Agberic*, or *Agberig*, was the first Saxon name of the hill and its vast buildings: *ag* being the name as we have already seen of the serpent, and *berig* in Saxon, signifying as at this day also in modern German, a hill; and these Saxons or Germans affected hilly situations very much for their towns, and often almost inaccessible situations, as better exposing the approach of an enemy, now these places were very naturally called after the hill, *berigs*, or *berics*; and in England the harsher sound of the final *g* being perhaps considered as unpleasant, was often changed to a *y*, and they then became *berrys* or *burys*, or, the *g* being sometimes retained, *burghs* also; after the same manner the common word for day, which is *dag*, became what we see it, viz. *day*; and *mag* was made into *may*, and not only did the final or terminating *g* in a word undergo this change but often the initial *g* also, as *gestern* was converted into *yestern*, &c., in this way we evidently get the name of *bury*. And next as to the *ag*, being of no very agreeable sound or meaning indeed, and Christian zeal in removing an idolatrous image in some degree perhaps assisting, and commending the change, the *g* was here sacrificed also, and made into a *y*, and thus we obtain the name of *Aybury*, and which renders the preservation of the *y* therefore necessary.

It may be also not unworthy of note that Snakes are at this day called *hags* or *aggs* in Yorkshire, and it may be further remarked that it is probable this Phœnicean word has extended more deeply into our language than we were before aware of, and to *hack* or *haggle* a thing, perhaps took its origin in the thing so disfigured being likened to the irregular work of a serpent's teeth.

It may be also an acceptable, and perhaps new, fact to the philologist to observe that in *akan*, we have the elements of the English word Snake, the *s* being added as in many other cases where this letter is an initial, as it were to strengthen and facilitate its pronunciation, as in *snaffle*, from *gnathos*, and in *snore*, from *ronfler*, &c. One step further and we conclude, if the *agg* in this eastern word for serpent was pronounced as in the greek, *ang*, as in αγγελος, for instance, an angel or messenger, we shall then obtain the chief elementary letters of the Latin word, *anguis*. Finally, in *Dragon*, we have the *ag* preserved with a thundering *dr* before it, but in the Latin, *Draco* the *k* or *c* hard is retained.



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as before in a thinner stratum to the action of the fire. In this way, the vessel is not blacked at all or smoked, and being dried over the top of the stove is always found ready for use;—or a small black tin pot may be put into the stove itself, and the doors closed, when the hot boiling water is procured almost instantaneously. Fig. 5, is a tin vessel also to fix on the side of the stove, wide enough for boiling an egg or so, in the same way. We need not further dilate on the very extensive application of it in a culinary point of view, as these things will suggest themselves almost naturally to one who requires their use, as with the student of small means, or to the poor man of honest endeavours, and to whom economy may be imperative. The stout wire seen to pass horizontally through the top of the stove with a brass knob to it, will conveniently suspend a fowl or other matter requiring to be roasted.

For chemical or pharmaceutical purposes a hole in the side of the stove enables us to work a retort. A larger opening, as of 5 or 6 inches diameter in the closing plate at the top of the stove, enables use to use a sand or water bath. And placing over this same opening a metallic or earthen flat pan, we may conveniently carry on the process of solution, evaporation, desiccation, &c., or use a small Still or alembic, such as is employed for scented herbs. A crucible placed in the naked fire can be brought to an intense heat. In some of these processes, as that of evaporation, distillation, &c., the grate, which is easily removable, must be advanced nearer the vessels by suspension or by transverse wires or rods across the suprafocal chamber. Also from the iron lid covering this opening, when not used as above, having a knob near the centre, with a hook below the plate, can be suspended any subject within the stove at any distance from the fire by an iron wire or link.

On facility in lighting a fire.

In cities and towns where wood is dear, the mode of lighting a fire is some consideration in the year's expenses: some servants very wastefully employing it, and others doing the same business as well with a very little; my way of doing it, which may, perhaps, easily be surpassed by the ingenuity and frequent practice of others,—and if not, my motto simply is, that of Horace, "*Si quid novisti, &c., his utere mecum*,—I thrust a piece of paper downwards and through the bars, (having first cleared a couple of bars from fuel, so as to admit air freely through them, and thrown a few small bits of fresh coal upon them to get a flame from, these bits being surrounded with the rest of the least burnt cinders,) this paper being readily seen and lighted with a match or candle when wanted: I then place two or three pieces of paper again over the former piece, and over this lay a small handful of little twigs, of old basket, or of the usual deals reduced to thinness, and again on these lay a stouter piece or two to maintain the fire, and on these some coals piled round about, dust and nubblings mixed. I then set a light to the bit of paper under the grate, close the supra-focal door, and wait the event. If more expedition is wanted, close also, or nearly close, the focal door, which makes a rapid draught, and the unclosed door fans back the flame in a remarkable manner upon the fuel, and the ignition is then most rapid.